ECE Highlights

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Éditorial

Droits de l'homme et croissance économique

La Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme a donné l'impulsion première à un corps de législation internationale qui, développé au cours de ces cinquante années, offre un remarquable exemple du travail normatif des Nations Unies. Depuis la Conférence mondiale de Vienne, l'indivisibilité entre les droits civils et politiques et les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels a été clairement affirmée. Ceci correspond à un impératif d'ordre éthique, mais aussi à une inquiétude : alors que le mouvement de démocratisation s'est étendu à toutes les régions du monde, ouvrant la voie au renforcement des libertés fondamentales, la satisfaction des droits économiques et sociaux ne connaît pas les mêmes avancées et, parfois même, régresse. Dans la plupart des pays du monde, et quel que soit leur niveau de développement, la pauvreté a tendance à augmenter, les écarts de revenu s'approfondissent, les systèmes de protection sociale sont affaiblis, la précarité de l'emploi s'aggrave.

Dans nombre de pays en transition on observe cette situation paradoxale. Avec la fin de la guerre froide, les droits civils et politiques ont progressé de façon décisive. Ils ont libéré l'initiative économique et donné des responsabilités aux citoyens. La Commission économique pour l'Europe y a contribué. Ainsi va-t-elle très prochainement adopter une Convention qui donnera à chacun un droit à l'information sur les questions relatives à l'environnement et la possibilité de participer à la prise de décision en ce domaine.

Mais si le processus de transition conduit à la mise en place d'institutions servant la démocratie et l'économie de marché, il a en même temps un coût social important comme en témoignent la baisse de l'espérance de vie, l'accroissement de la mortalité maternelle et infantile, le taux élevé de chômage, l'insécurité, les migrations non maîtrisées, la dégradation des bénéfices sociaux et la baisse des revenus pour une large part de la population de ces pays.

(Suite à la p. 2.)

(For the English translation, see p.12.)

Interview with

Ambassador Eveline Herfkens of the Netherlands

Newly-elected Chairperson of the Economic Commission for Europe

ECE Highlights: ***You have just been elected Chairperson of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE). What would you like to achieve during your term?***

Ambassador Eveline Herfkens: The most important thing for me is to continue what my two predecessors, Ambassador Willems and Ambassador Naray, started, namely the setting-up of the reform and its implementation. What I hope is that we can bring it one step further. I noted during this Commission session, that there is a sense of trust among ECE member countries and between them and the secretariat. This atmosphere of trust is very important. Secondly, giving ECE a higher profile is very important. The Commission is unequivocally relevant in the technical areas in which it works. But it is also completely relevant for its members. What is interesting is that most organizations usually project a better image than what they are actually like in reality. However, for ECE it is the contrary. ECE is doing terrific work and is at the head of the pack in terms of its reform. However, it is not as well known inside and

outside the United Nations system. I hope to use the relations which I have from former jobs to help the Executive Secretary to put ECE on the map.

Why is the image of ECE so weak?

Perhaps because it is located in Geneva where there is an extensive family of international organizations. ECLAC is in Santiago and there is nothing else there! Perhaps ECE hasn't shed the image it acquired through its work during the cold war. People aren't sufficiently aware that ECE has been adapting to the needs of the twenty-first century.

Did you know about ECE before you came to Geneva?

Yes, I did! I knew about its technical work. I didn't know what its role was as a governmental forum. I believe in the economic area, ECE is the only international institution which actually encompasses the whole of Europe. Seven years ago the iron curtain was dismantled, but there are now new lace curtains starting to flutter across Europe. I think the particular niche of ECE is that it is the only organization which brings together all European countries.

What can be improved?

Improving cooperation with other organizations having similar mandates as ECE is crucial. What strikes me for example in the current state of cooperation is that very little is going on between ECE and international financial institutions. It would be important to work more closely with EBRD and with the World Bank. For example, I found it somewhat regrettable that the World Bank was not present at our recent Spring Seminar where bank restructuring was discussed. It could have profited from the discussion and the sharing of its experience would have interested the seminar participants. In fact when I was speaking of using the relations I established in former positions, I was thinking about the World Bank. There I was a member of the Board where I not only represented the Netherlands, but also nine countries in transition: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. During these six years I identified myself with the problems of these countries and became acquainted with all the people in the World Bank dealing with these countries and their problems. What I hope to do is initiate contacts at a high level in order to build a positive working relationship between ECE and the World Bank.

The ECE reform was adopted last year and it is now being implemented. Do you foresee any more changes?

I believe that the real restructuring is behind us. But that doesn't mean that change will not continue to occur. The real world is changing, relations between countries change, relations inside countries change, so why would ECE remain at a standstill? If you take for example the fact that many ECE countries have applied for accession to EU, it is foreseeable that their interest in ECE will diminish. So ECE will have to pay more attention to the needs of non-EU acceding transition countries. Issues change and any organization should adapt itself to the real world. Reform is not something that you start and then that's it. But I think in terms of restructuring, the main things are in place. The ECE secretariat will continue to work as it is now restructured at least for the coming year. I don't foresee any serious revolution.

Do you mean that the role of ECE will be limited to helping non-EU countries?

Not at all! ECE will always interact with all countries of the region, including my own. There are lessons to be learned from all countries in the region. We could for example very well imagine that next year's spring seminar would focus on issues on which the experiences of EU countries differ. Furthermore many aspects of the work of ECE, in the field of environment, trade, statistics and many other sectors are of relevance to all countries of the region and not only to countries in transition.

(Suite de la p. 1.)

Droits de l'homme et croissance économique

Faire en sorte que la transition économique et, plus largement, l'intégration à l'économie mondiale soient conduites de façon à assurer le respect des droits économiques et sociaux fondamentaux pour tous devient un objectif important. La Commission économique pour l'Europe s'est attachée jusqu'à présent à nourrir le débat sur les politiques économiques permettant de réussir la transition. Elle a souligné la nécessité de forger un consensus social sur les réformes, mais son travail d'analyse doit aller plus loin et mettre en rapport les réformes économiques et leur impact social, notamment en termes de distribution des revenus, d'emploi et de pauvreté.

La leçon que l'on peut retenir de l'évolution des pays en transition, et qui peut être généralisée, est la suivante : le respect des droits individuels est une condition nécessaire mais non suffisante pour la satisfaction des droits économiques et sociaux. Il est essentiel de promouvoir aussi un ensemble de politiques économiques et sociales qui combinent création de richesses et équité sociale. En dernier ressort, il s'agit d'établir une relation positive entre performance économique et progrès social, sans doute le principal enjeu du développement à l'aube du XXIe siècle.

Le Secrétaire exécutif,
Commission économique pour l'Europe

Yves BERTHELOT

There has always been a dichotomy between what is said in Geneva and in New York by the same Member States. How could it be improved?

I know by now that colleagues in New York are aware that among regional commissions, ECE is the leader of the pack in terms of reform. As ambassadors, our foremost responsibility is to brief our colleagues in New York about what is actually going on here. But I think that in New York there is indeed a more positive image of ECE than there was one or two years ago.

How do you see the Europe of tomorrow?

I really would like to see a Europe without any borders. The iron curtain is no more, but as I mentioned before there are now a number of lace curtains floating all over Europe. I really would hope that during the next century we can get rid of most, if not all, of them. That will very much depend on the quality of the policy of all these countries concerned and on the capacity of all the societies to become open ones. And neither of these issues is simple.

There was an idea floating around last year to abolish the regional commissions. What do you think of it?

When such an idea was expressed last year by a group of "experts" in New York, I strongly pointed out that the world is composed of a number of regions and that it is important for the United Nations system to have commissions dealing with the particularity of all these regions. Regional commissions have found their own niche within each of their respective regions. I strongly believe that the regional commissions have a clear *raison d'être*. Furthermore I am positive that if regional commissions were to be abolished, within a decade people would come to the conclusion that they would have to be reinvented. ❑

Fifty-third annual session of the Economic Commission focuses on strengthening regional cooperation and continued action on reform, 21-23 April 1998

A reformed and innovative fifty-third annual session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was held from 21-23 April 1998 in conformity with the Plan of Action that had been adopted at the Commission's jubilee session last year. The new format comprised the UN/ECE Spring Seminar, the first part of the annual session devoted to an intergovernmental economic debate and the more traditional part focusing on the direction of ECE's activities, including guidance to the work of its Principal Subsidiary Bodies, and its cooperation with other bodies active in the region.

Lively and focused intergovernmental debate

The opening session on Tuesday, 21 April constituted a major highlight of the Commission session. The economic debate which focused on factors that may increase divergences in economic development among the countries of the region was discussed in three segments and introduced by interactive panel discussions.

The first debate on the fragility of the banking system in the transition economies and their vulnerability to external shocks—could a crisis similar to those which occurred in Latin America occur in Europe?—was launched by a panel consisting of Mr. Marek Belka, former Minister of Finance, currently Adviser to the President of Poland; Mr. Bernhard Molitor, Chairman, OECD Economic Development and Review Committee; Mr. Marjan Senjur, Minister of Economic Relations and Development of Slovenia; and Mr. Bernard Snoy, Director, EBRD. This segment also benefited from the conclusions of the Seminar on Enterprise and Bank Restructuring in the Transition Economies which took place on the day preceding the Commission session.

The second debate on the economic risks as well as the benefits to the region of increased globalization was led by Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD and Mr. Milijove Panic, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

In the afternoon, Commission members discussed the opportunities and challenges of the euro for non-members of the European Union. Mr. Bernhard Molitor, Chairman, OECD Economic Development and Review Committee, acted as moderator for this segment. He was joined by the following discussion leaders: Mr. Marjan Senjur, Minister of Economic Relations and Development of Slovenia; Mr. Joly Dixon, Director of International Economic and Financial Affairs, DGII, European Commission, Brussels; and Mr. Massimo Russo, Special Adviser to the Managing Director, IMF. The UN/ECE *Economic Survey of Europe* served as background document to these debates.

The timing and sequencing of policies appeared as a major question underlying the debate. For example, should privatization be achieved first so as to create the conditions for an efficient restructuring or, conversely, should restructuring be considered as a prerequisite for a successful privatization? Should countries acceding to the European Union adopt the euro as quickly as possible or, rather, take more time for proceeding gradually to the adjustment required in terms of monetary, financial and budgetary policies? Whilst there are no obvious answers to these questions, the debate revealed that there are convergent views on important related issues. These included the role of foreign direct investment as a powerful instrument for enterprise restructuring; the joint responsibility of national and international authorities in preventing or containing the risks related to the volatility of short-term capital flows; and the ways in which macroeconomic policies and restructuring measures impact on each other and affect the sustainability of economic growth.

The contributions and the views expressed during the seminar will be reflected in Issue No. 2 of the 1998 *Economic Survey of Europe*.

Members of the newly-elected Bureau, from left Ambassador Bolat Utemuratov (Kazakhstan), Ambassador Eveline Herfkens (Netherlands), Ambassador Petros Eftychiou (Cyprus) and Ambassador Miroslav Somol (Czech Republic) with the Secretary of the Commission, Ms. Susan Bartolo.

Agreements and decisions

Reform process

Several decisions were taken at the session to move the reform process forward, including the adoption of common guidelines for prioritization of the work of the Commission's Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs). There was also agreement to strengthen coordination with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on all issues of common concern as well as with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Central European and CIS countries. In addition, ECE agreed that meetings be held between the Regional Office of UNEP for Europe and the ECE Environment and Human Settlements Division in order to coordinate work and identify new opportunities and that it collaborate with HABITAT in organizing joint training activities for countries in transition.

Another measure included the adoption of a recommendation by the Chairman, following his consultations related to the biennialization of the annual sessions of the Commission, that the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work continue the examination of relevant legal and other aspects of biennialization.

ECOSOC review of the regional commissions

Delegates discussed the Commission's contribution to this summer's review by the Economic and Social Council of the work of ECE and the other regional commissions of the United Nations. In this respect, the Commission adopted decision A (53) in which it draws the attention of ECOSOC to information on the relationships that ECE has built up with other organizations in its areas of cooperation as contained in documents E/ECE/1359 and Corr.1 and E/ECE/1362 outlining how the Commission harmonizes its activities with those of global and other regional groupings with similar expertise.

Operational activities and technical assistance

The Commission agreed that, given the limited resources available, the selection of projects to be accorded technical assistance, whether emanating from subregions or from individual countries, should be based on their merit. The Executive Secretary of ECE was requested to pay particular attention to countries that do not benefit sufficiently from other programmes of technical assistance and to intensify the attention paid to the specific circumstances of the ECE Mediterranean countries. The Commission further expressed its appreciation of the effective cooperation and dialogue that had been established with subregional organizations and initiatives and invited the Executive Secretary to continue to strengthen this cooperation. In addition, the Commission invited the Executive Secretary to continue his efforts to explore ways of increasing extrabudgetary funding for its operational activities and the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities.

Relations with the business community

The Commission also decided to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group composed of member States and the secretariat in order to consider and develop guidelines and practices governing relationships with the business community.

Election of officers

For the fifty-fourth session, Ambassador Eveline Herfkens (Netherlands) was elected Chairperson and Ambassador Petros Eftychiou (Cyprus), Ambassador Miroslav Somol (Czech Republic) and Ambassador Bolat Utemuratov (Kazakhstan) were elected Vice-Chairmen.

UN/ECE Spring Seminar

The UN/ECE Spring Seminar which focused on Enterprise and Bank Restructuring in the Transition Economies took place on Monday, 20 April 1998, the day preceding the annual session. The Seminar was launched by Mr. Mark Schaffer of Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, who was joined by discussants Mr. Marek Belka, Institute of Economics, Polish Academy of Sciences and Mr. Eugen Jurzyca, Centre for Economic Development, Bratislava. The topic of banking sector reform in the transition economies—a central banking perspective, was then presented by Mr. Elmar Koch, Bank for International Settlements, Basle, who was followed by discussants Mr. Istvan P. Szekely, National Bank of Hungary and Mr. David Kemme, University of Memphis, Tennessee. Case-studies were presented on the restructuring in Russia by Mr. Evgeny Gavrilenkov, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Moscow; Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by Ms. Yelena Kalyuzhnova, Centre for Euro-Asian Studies, University of Reading. The discussant for this segment was Ms. Sylvana Malle, OECD. Case-studies were then presented for the Czech Republic by Mr. Pavel Mertlik, Institute of Economics of the

Czech National Bank, and for Slovenia by Mr. Ivan Ribnikar, University of Ljubljana. The discussant was Ms. Marie Lavigne, Institut de Sciences Mathématiques et Économiques Appliquées, Paris. A case-study of the Eastern Länder of Germany was presented by Mr. Alexander Eickelpasch, DIW, Berlin and discussed by Mr. Michael Kaser, Institute for German Studies, University of Birmingham. ❑

Environment for Europe

Aarhus, 23-25 June 1998

The fourth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" will bring together Environment Ministers and high-level experts from Europe and North America in the Danish city of Aarhus. There they will discuss pan-European environmental cooperation and assess the progress made since their previous meeting in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, almost three years ago.

High on their agenda will be:

- The new Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters;
- "Dobris + 3";
- How to phase out leaded petrol;
- Financing environmental projects;
- The environmental challenges facing central and eastern Europe and the newly-independent States;
- Finance and economic instruments;
- Business and environment;
- Biological and landscape diversity;
- Energy conservation, and
- The future of "Environment for Europe".

There will be a half-day NGO session on public participation as well.

Moreover, on the occasion of the Conference, the Ministers will meet within the Executive Body of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to adopt and sign two new protocols: one on persistent organic pollutants, or POPs; the other on heavy metals.

The "Environment for Europe" process remains an essential political framework for cooperation on environmental protection in Europe. It regularly brings together Environment Ministers at pan-European conferences to formulate environmental policy. Their next meeting will take place in Denmark, from 23-25 June 1998.

Below are more details on some of these issues which will be taken up at the Ministerial Conference.

Negotiators reach agreement on Protocols on Heavy Metals and Persistent Organic Pollutants

Negotiators meeting at UN/ECE arrived at consensus on two eagerly awaited protocols to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution: one on heavy metals, the other on persistent organic pollutants or POPs. Both protocols are the culmination of a long preparatory process, which started in 1990, when UN/ECE experts first started looking into the problems associated with heavy metals and POPs. Now that countries have resolved their differences and overcome the final hurdles after intense negotiations, the protocols are ready to be adopted and signed in Aarhus, Denmark, in June on the occasion of the fourth Ministerial Conference, "Environment for Europe".

The draft protocol on heavy metals targets three particularly harmful substances: lead, cadmium and mercury. According to one of its basic obligations, countries have to reduce their emissions of these three metals below their levels in 1990, or an alternative year between 1985 and 1995. The protocol aims to cut emissions from iron and steel and non-ferrous metal industrial sources, combustion processes and waste incineration. It lays down stringent limit values for emissions from stationary sources and suggests best available techniques (BAT) for these sources. The protocol requires countries to phase out leaded petrol. It also introduces measures to lower heavy metal emissions from other products, such as mercury in batteries and proposes the introduction of management measures for other mercury-containing products.

The draft protocol on persistent organic pollutants focuses on a list of 16 substances, which have been singled out according to certain risk criteria:

* ***Pesticides***: aldrin, chlordane, chlordecone, DDT, Dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), mirex, toxaphene, hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH) (including lindane);

* ***Industrial chemicals***: hexabromobiphenyl, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs);

* ***By-products or contaminants***: dioxins, furans, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

The ultimate objective is to eliminate any discharges, emissions and losses of POPs. The protocol bans the production and use of some products outright, namely, aldrin, chlordane, chlordecone, dieldrin, endrin, hexabromobiphenyl, mirex and toxaphene. Others are scheduled for elimination at a later stage such as DDT, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, PCBs. In addition, the protocol severely restricts the use of DDT, HCH (including lindane) and PCBs. Limited uses which are thought to be essential and for which there are no adequate substitutes, can be exempted. For example, the use of substances like DDT will be allowed for public health emergencies. The protocol includes provisions for dealing with the wastes of products that will be banned. It also obliges countries to reduce their emissions of dioxins, furans, PAHs and HCB below their levels in 1990,

or alternative years between 1985 and 1995. It puts forward best available techniques to reduce emissions of these POPs. For the incineration of municipal, hazardous and medical wastes, it lays down specific limit values.

The two protocols have been designed to stand the test of time: they foresee the possibility of modifying the list of substances or the range of control and management actions without renegotiating the entire protocol. These two protocols will set a framework for legislation on a large number of pollutants for countries in Europe and North America. But both protocols will also have repercussions beyond the UN/ECE region. It is hoped, for instance, that they will help to protect the vulnerable Arctic region where heavy metals and POPs are accumulating even though there are no sources of emissions nearby. The protocol on POPs is also seen as a basis for work towards a worldwide agreement. □

Putting an end to environmental secrecy

UN/ECE reaches agreement on new environmental rights convention

"Obstacles to public access to environmental information and to the public's involvement in decision-making are everywhere. Industry and government agen-

cies may collect environmental data, but they either do not report them to the public or report them when they re out of date. Making your voice heard in the decision-making process is even harder," according to Mr Kaj Bärlund, Director at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE).

UN/ECE has negotiated a regional convention on environmental rights to guarantee access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice in order to protect the right of everyone to live in a healthy environment. Reconciling the different attitudes towards public participation and access to information prevailing in countries as diverse as Norway, the United Kingdom, Kazakhstan or the Russian Federation was never going to be easy. But after many months of intense and arduous negotiations, a final agreement was reached at the eleventh hour. The new convention is now ready for adoption and signature at the fourth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Aarhus, Denmark, in June.

The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the negotiations has been without precedent. As full-fledged participants, they have added a new dimension to the negotiations and a fresh point of view. They have helped to give the convention the shape that it has today.

A unique convention

The new convention—more so than traditional environmental conventions—spells out the public authorities' obligations towards the public at large, and not only towards other parties to the convention. It is more intersectoral in nature, as it covers all environmental fields, such as water, air, soil, chemicals, human health, land-use planning, living conditions, etc. Furthermore, the provisions of the new convention are more detailed and lay down specific requirements in terms of openness and transparency. It will be open for accession by non-UN/ECE member States as well. This is the first time that an environmental convention drawn up under the auspices of UN/ECE includes such a provision.

"In fact, it sets an example for strengthening democracy throughout the UN/ECE region and beyond. This is the reason why UN/ECE can say, without hesitation, that this convention will be unique," explains Mr Kaj Bärlund.

Encouraging a sustainable lifestyle

Economic growth, demographic changes, higher purchasing power and increased mobility have lead to more consumption. It has been widely recognized that the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production is the major cause of the deterioration of the environment, main producer of adverse environmental impact. To address these issues a workshop on encouraging local initiatives towards sustainable consumption patterns sponsored by UN/ECE and the Government of Austria was held in Vienna from 2 to 4 February 1998. The purpose of the workshop, the first of its kind, was to examine the practical experience gained from the numerous initiatives which have been launched in cities and towns in the ECE region to encourage sustainable consumption patterns. Participants discussed locally initiated projects and programmes aimed at raising public awareness about the environmental impact of individual consumption, steering consumers' choices towards environmentally sound goods and services and furthering the sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. It was agreed that there is a need to dismantle barriers to the promotion of sustainable consumption initiatives at the local level, to introduce incentive measures, and to encourage close cooperation and partnerships between central governments, local and regional authorities and other major groups such as consumer associations and environmental non-governmental organizations. The workshop prepared a set of recommendations to Governments including a proposal for follow-up action which will be presented to the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Aarhus, Denmark, from 23 to 25 June 1998 as well as the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development at its next session in the spring. ❑

NEWS BRIEFS

UN/CEFACT acts to remove barriers to international trade

At a recent WTO seminar held from 9-10 March, UN/CEFACT (United Nations Centre for the Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport) addressed some of the key questions raised at the seminar such as: how small and medium-sized enterprises can obtain greater access to international trade; the reduction of paperwork and procedures for companies; how to encourage the introduction of more modern frontier controls, such as audit and risk-analysis based controls. UN/CEFACT has adopted new measures that address each of these issues. To make global commerce a reality, UN/CEFACT believes that business and administrative processes must be made more effective and transparent. Combined with information technology, these processes provide substantial benefits to both enterprises and governments, such as: simplified procedures, integrated supply chains, effective trading communities, reduced cycle times, streamlined business and lower costs.

The UN/CEFACT worldwide network

UN/CEFACT is unique in that its participants include government, business and trade representatives from UN/ECE and United Nations Member States from all regions of the world, as well as representatives of other intergovernmental organizations. To reinforce its unique international scope, UN/CEFACT has set up a network of partnerships between its secretariat and the secretariats of UNCTAD and the other regional economic commissions of the United Nations (located in the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, Africa and Western Asia).

Promoting small and medium-sized enterprises

The promotion of entrepreneurship through the setting up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is crucial for the transformation to a market economy and the democratization of society in the transition economies. SMEs are recognized as an engine of economic growth and a source of sustainable development. The setting up of SMEs can secure job creation and self-employment.

In 1996 the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) was launched with the aim of encouraging co-operation among participating countries—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey—and facilitating their economic integration into the European region. Six projects were selected for elaboration and implementation by the SECI Agenda Committee. Among these the project on "Financial policies to promote small and medium-sized enterprises through micro credit and credit guarantee schemes" was started. The project is being coordinated by the Romanian National Agency for Privatization with technical assistance from UN/ECE. The Project Group has held two meetings and established an information database on the ECE WWW site, organized a training seminar in micro crediting and prepared ten country studies on best practices in financing SMEs. One of the major activities of this Project Group will be a two-day Expert Group Meeting to be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 14 and 15 May 1998. The aim of this meeting is to review the best practices in individual countries, exchange experiences, learn from the best practices in the EU countries and elaborate recommendations on how to create a sustainable economic environment to finance SMEs. ❑

Off the Press

Fertility and Family Surveys

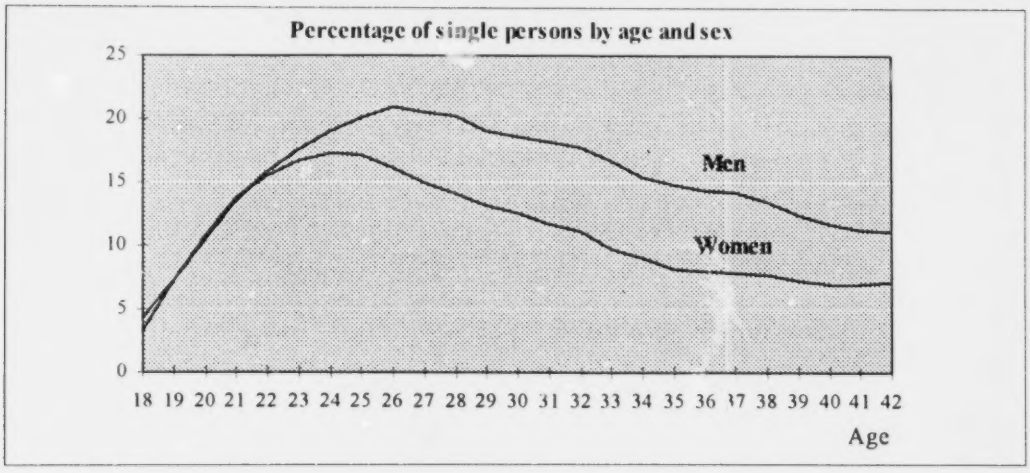
Sweden: More women than men with higher education in the coming decades

In many respects, Sweden has gone far in solving gender inequality. It is possible for women to combine education and labour force participation with having children. The increase of child-care institutions and an improved parental insurance system have ensured that women are able to participate in education and paid occupations to almost the same extent as men. These are some of the findings published by the UN/ECE in *Fertility and Family Surveys in Countries of the ECE Region, Standard Country Report, Sweden.* The report also shows that in Sweden, the percentage of people with a higher education in 1994 was as high among women as among men. Twenty-five per cent of women aged 25-64 years have a post-secondary education compared to 23 per cent for men at the same age. About 63 per cent of students graduating from post-secondary education were women. Since the predominance of women in higher education has been constant during the 1980s and in the first half of the 1990s, there will be more women than men with higher education in the decades to come. Parallel to this increase, female participation in professional activity has also been growing during the 1970s and 1980s. The main increase consists of part-time workers, many of whom work in the public sector. Eighty-nine

per cent of women and 94 per cent of men aged 25-54 are in the labour force. Among women 39 per cent are working part-time.

Fredrik Granström, *Fertility and Family Surveys in Countries of the ECE Region, Standard Country Report, Sweden*, Sales No. GV.E.97.0.21. ❑

One third of the Dutch live alone



According to a standard country report on the Netherlands, with an average age of 28, Dutch women are amongst the oldest first-time mothers in the world. One in five Dutch women born in the 1970s will remain childless, compared with one in ten of those born in 1945. The report also shows that since 1975 mean female age at first marriage has risen from 22.6 in 1975 to 27.4 years in 1995. The marriage experience is partly compensated by cohabiting experience. In addition to the rise of unmarried cohabitation, today an increasing number of children are born out of wedlock or indeed of any relationship at all. Another finding of the study is that more and more people live alone. While 11.8 per cent of all households were one-person households in 1960, by 1995 this percentage had risen to 31.4 per cent. There are three main reasons for this evolution. First, more young people live alone for a while after leaving their parents. Secondly, there are more divorced people. The third reason is ageing. Since women have an average life expectancy of about six years more than men, and since they generally marry men who are on average two years older, many widows live alone for a relatively long time.

Jan Latten and Arie de Graaf, *Fertility and Family Surveys in Countries of the ECE Region, Standard Country Report, the Netherlands*, Sales No. GV.E.97.22. ❑

The above reports are the result of a comprehensive survey research programme on partnership and reproductive behaviour which the Population Activities Unit of UN/ECE began in the late 1980s with support from the United Nations Population Fund. They are part of a series of 20 comparable country reports, which examine new trends and patterns of partnership and reproductive behaviour in Europe and in North America.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Portugal's chemical industry opens its doors

The Portuguese chemical industry, with its wide and comprehensive range of chemical products, is today a highly successful example of privatization and integration into the European Union. To make this exemplary achievement more widely known, the UN/ECE is organizing a study tour in Portugal from 11 to 17 July 1998, in cooperation with the Portuguese Ministry of the Economy.

The principal objectives of the study tour are to promote contacts and exchanges of views among representatives of Governments, chemical federations and chemical enterprises and to encourage cooperation between companies.

The tour will consist of visits to seven production firms, including chemical, petrochemical, plastics processing and pharmaceutical plants. It will also include meetings with the Government and industry leaders. One day will be reserved for discussing Portugal's experience of privatization and multinational cooperation in research and development and will include a visit to a research institute. Another day will be devoted to a visit to EXPO '98 with a viewing of an exhibit on soil. The study tour is intended for representatives of the chemical industry, trade associations, Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as journalists and other people concerned with the chemical industry. ❑

UN/ECE: the feeling of being part of an undertaking

Interview with

Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic

Former Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE)

ECE Highlights: ***You have been working in many UN departments. In what sense is UN/ECE different?***

Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic: The main characteristic of UN/ECE is its constant interaction with delegations. I was absolutely amazed when I came to UN/ECE to see that we had more than 150 meetings a year. This constant political interaction on technical issues is surely some retainment of the cold war, at a time when UN/ECE was the only place where technical information was exchanged between two fundamentally opposed blocs of countries. This drawback of the cold war proved to be an advantage afterwards because, due to this interaction, we could assist the countries in transition to adapt to market reforms much more quickly than any other organization. What is also exceptional about UN/ECE as compared to other organizations is the enormous network of contacts at the regional, subregional and country levels.

You come from a country in transition. How is UN/ECE helping your country?

My country, Croatia, is surely not the best example on how UN/ECE is helping countries in transition as the war situation which prevailed there has not permitted UN/ECE to fully intervene in the country. Despite the situation, UN/ECE has still had a number of activities in Croatia. Among these activities are a number of workshops. It has also helped my national authorities in installing a system of national accounts, in improving the system of land registration, and water management for agriculture. These are the types of things where the exchange of experience from other countries in transition and from western countries helps a lot. In my country, as in many other transition countries, there is an important intellectual capacity. People are quick learners and therefore the experience of best practices is very helpful.

You just said that UN/ECE had a role during the cold war, a different one nowadays for economies in transition. But what is UN/ECE going to do after the transition is over?

There is one thing which should be made clear, namely that UN/ECE 's work is important for economies in transition but it is equally important for the developed countries of the rest of the region. The environmental conventions elaborated under ECE auspices are just one example. ECE had a pioneering role dating back from 1972 in this field at the Stockholm Conference. These conventions are perhaps even more important for western countries than for countries in transition. A significant example of the importance all countries of the region attached to the environmental work of UN/ECE is the "Environment for Europe process" and the forthcoming Ministerial Conference which is going to take place in Denmark next June. You can be sure that the Ministers of Environment from all 55 UN/ECE countries are going to be present and that is really a sign that what UN/ECE does right now and will continue to do in the future is in the interest of all countries. Furthermore, you should not forget that UN/ECE is the only forum where all these 55 countries from western and eastern Europe as well as Central Asia and North America come together to discuss issues of common concern on an equal footing. In addition, as the process of accession of transition countries to the European Union is surely going to take more time than expected, UN/ECE is the only forum which gives them the feeling of being part of the European unification processes and which gives them a European identity.

How do you see the Europe of the twenty-first century?

Surely very different compared to what it has been during the twentieth century. The change had already started during these last few decades. To my mind the Maastricht treaty and the recent intergovernmental conference were only the starting-point of this process. The second step will be a social one. It is impossible to imagine that the sole effect of a united Europe could be economic without any social dimension and that is, indeed, going

to change the face of Europe. In the meantime, I feel it extremely important for the countries which are not members of the European Union to be given assurances of belonging to a European entity, i.e. to give them a certain type of status which would not exclude them from Europe. As a Croatian I feel that giving countries a deep commitment to an undivided Europe, a deep commitment that they share the European identity and values would be an enormous contribution to the peace and prosperity of our region.

Could you imagine some time during the twenty-first century a kind of United States of Europe?

There are certain types of traditions which are much stronger here than in any other parts of the world. It was relatively easy to create the United States of America, but in the case of Europe, the best we can hope for will be united policies but not one State. People have such a strong cultural identity in Europe that I don't think anybody would renounce it. At least not in the short term.

What is your best memory of UN/ECE?

Normally the post of "Deputy" in whatever circumstances is generally considered as frustrating. But I must say that it was the contrary in UN/ECE. At one point I even had two jobs, that of Deputy and that of acting Director of the Energy Division. But I was used to hard work and I think that it is very important for managers to set the example. Under my own initiative, I could launch a number of projects related to social aspects, particularly the problems of ageing and women and cooperation with civil society, primarily the business community. I intensified assistance to countries in transition and worked on greater interaction with the subregional groupings and special initiatives which are shaping the new architecture of Europe. I also enjoyed the team work at ECE very much. My door was always open and I enjoyed listening to my colleagues, to their suggestions and comments. ❑

Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic, a national of Croatia, served as Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe from June 1993 to end-December 1997. Mrs. Pastizzi-Ferencic has had an extensive and productive career at the service of the United Nations. In 1981 she was appointed as the first Director to set up the United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). She subsequently served as Director of the Natural Resources and Energy Division, United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development in 1990 and in 1992, prior to joining UN/ECE, she served as Director of the Science, Technology, Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development.

ECE Calendar

1998

May

4-8	Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
4-8	Meeting of Experts on Passive Safety
11-13	Meeting of Experts on the Standardization of Meat (porcine, bovine and poultry)
11-15	Meeting of the Signatories/Parties to the Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Prague, Czech Republic)
18-20	CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS (OECD, Paris, France)
18-20	Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies
18-20	Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Oslo, Norway)
25-27	Working Party on International Contract Practices in Industry
26-28	Steering Committee of the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project
26-29	Seminar on Integrated Statistical Information Systems and Related Matters (ISIS '98) (Bratislava, Slovakia)

June

2-5	Meeting of Experts on Pollution and Energy
8-9	Meeting of Experts on Natural Gas Resources
8-11	Eighth Conference on Urban and Regional Research (Madrid, Spain, preceded by a Study Tour, 6-7 June)
8-12	Working Group on Strategies
10-12	Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation
15-19	Meeting of Experts on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (Fruit) (Grenoble, France)
16-18	COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
23-26	Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles
24-26	Working Party on Customs questions affecting Transport
25-26	Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution—Special session (Aarhus, Denmark)
29/ 3 July	Seminar on Agricultural Statistics for Central and East European Countries (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation)

Editorial

Human Rights and Economic Development

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights gave the first impetus to a body of international legislation, which, developed over the course of fifty years, offers a remarkable example of the normative work of the United Nations. Since the Vienna Conference, there has been a clear assertion of the indivisibility of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. The Vienna message is the result of an ethical necessity but also of a certain concern. While the movement for democracy has extended to practically all regions of the world opening the way to the strengthening of fundamental freedoms, the satisfaction of economic and social rights has not seen the same progress and in some cases there has even been regression. In most countries in the world, whatever their level of development, poverty is increasing, the gap between rich and poor is growing, social welfare systems are weakening, and unemployment is rife.

The situation of a number of countries in transition illustrates this paradox. At the end of the cold war, civil and political rights made decisive progress, they released economic initiative, they gave citizens back their responsibility, and the Economic Commission for Europe contributed to this. In the near future they will be signing a convention which will grant right to information on matters pertaining to the environment and the possibility of taking part in decision-making in that sphere.

But at the same time the process of transition has had serious social costs: reduced life expectancy, higher mother and child mortality, high unemployment, insecurity, uncontrolled migration, the degradation of social benefits, and falling incomes for a large part of the population in these countries.

To act in such a way that economic transition, and more broadly, integration in the global economy, be conducted while respecting fundamental economic and social rights, has become an important objective. The Economic Commission for Europe has been committed, up to the present, to enriching the discussion of economic policies which can ensure the success of the transition process. It has underlined the necessity of forging a social consensus on the reforms, but its analytical work must go further by establishing links between the impact on income distribution, employment and poverty.

The lesson which can be generalized from the countries in transition is the following: respect for human rights is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one alone for meeting the needs of economic and social rights. We must also promote economic and social policies which combine the creation of wealth and social equity. In the final analysis one must endeavour to establish a positive link between economic performance and social progress, and this is doubtless one of the greatest challenges facing us on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

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